

Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

66616

DRAFTED BY S/S:FVORTIZ

APPROVED BY S/S:FVORTIZ

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O 272153Z AUG 75 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 204402 TOSEC 100226

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT ROME 12329 ACTION SECSTATE DATED 27 AUG 75

QUOTE

S E C R E T ROME 12329

NODIS

FOR UNDERSECRETARY SISCO FROM AMBASSDOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL AND THE VATICAN

REF: STATE 199682

SUMMARY: ARCHBISHOP CASSAROLI TOLD SARROS AUGUST 27 THAT HE SHARED SECRETARY'S PREOCCUPATION WITH PORTUGAL AND WAS GLAD SECRETARY DECIDED ON PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENTS THERE. WITH REGARD TO VATICAN'S PRECEPTION OF PORTUGUESE EVENTS, HE EXPRESSED CERTAIN "PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS" AND PROMISED A MORE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK AFTER FURTHER REFLECTION ON SUBJECT OF WHAT ROLE CHURCH CAN PLAY IN CONTRIBUTING TO MODERATE EVOLUTION IN PORTUGAL.

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1. PURSUANT TO INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTTEL SARROS GAVE VATICAN "FOREIGN MINISTER" CASSAROLI SECRETARY'S VIEWS ON PORTUGAL, UNDERLING (AFTER PROVIDING COPY OF SPEECH) THAT BIRMINGHAM SPEECH OF AUGUST 14 ACCURATELY REFLECTED GROWING US CONCERN OVER SITUATION. HE ALSO CITED OVER-NIGHT ITALIAN PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING THE CURRENT DANGEROUS GOVERNMENTAL IMPASSE IN PORTUGAL. SARROS THEN ASKED MONSIGNOR CASSAROLI FOR DESCRIPTION OF VATICAN'S PERCEPTION OF PORTUGUESE SITUATION AND WHAT ROLE CHURCH BELIEVED IT CAN PLAY IN CONTRIBUTING TO MODERATE EVOLUTION THERE.

2. CASSAROLI PREFACED HIS REPLY BY STATING THAT HE HAD SEVERAL "PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS" WHICH WOULD BE PASSED ON TO THE SECRETARY BUT THAT HE WOULD WANT TO REFLECT FURTHER ON THE TWO QUESTIONS POSED AND PUT HIS THOUGHTS ON A MORE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK. HE PROMISED TO PROVIDE THIS IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

3. VATICAN PERCEPTIONS: CASSAROLI SAID THAT VATICAN SHARED US PREOCCUPATION WITH EVOLVING PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SITUATION. IN EXPRESSING STRONG APPROVAL OF SECRETARY'S PUBLIC POSTURE REGARDING SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN PORTUGAL, HE MENTIONED VATICAN PERPLEXITY AT SOVIET TOLERANCE OF EFFORTS BY PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS TO OVERTURN ELECTORAL RESULTS. HE OPINED THAT LOGICALLY COMMUNIST EFFORTS TO AFFECT PORTUGUESE EQUILIBRIUM ARE CONTRARY TO PROFESSED SOVIET COMMITMENT TO EUROPEAN DETENTE. THIS HE SAID WAS PARTICULARLY UPSETTING TO PORTUGUESE EPISCOPATE WHICH ALSO ASSUMED SOVIET OPERATIONAL (AS DISTINCT FROM RHETORICAL) RESTRAINT OVER PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS.

4. CHURCH ROLE: THE EPISCOPATE HE SAID HAS CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL POWER BUT HAS BEEN CAREFUL IN WAY OF EXERCISING IT BECAUSE OF THREE REASONS: LACK OF ORGANIZATION AT POLITICAL LEVEL; FEAR OF FAR-LEFTIST REPRISALS, AND GENERALIZED SELF-RESTRAINT ON DIRECT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. THE PORTUGUESE CHURCH HAS AVOIDED PUBLIC ASSOCIATION WITH SPECIFIC EXISTING POLITICAL PARTIES. IT HAS, HOWEVER, MADE GENERALIZED CALLS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A PLURALIST SECRET

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DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IN PORTUGAL. IT HAS ALSO MAINTAINED (UNIDENTIFIED) CONTACTS WITH AFM. IN THE NORTH, HE SAID, THE CHURCH ROLE HAS BEEN MORE VISIBLE AND MORE DIRECT. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE CITED EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES OF ARCHBISHOP DA SILVA OF BRAGA, AND STATED THAT ARCHBISHOP OF OPORTO COULD PROBABLY BE MORE EFFICACIOUS MOBILIZER OF PUBLIC OPINION BECAUSE OF THIS PUBLIC BACKGROUND AS SALAZAR OPPONENT.

COMMENT: CASSAROLI WHILE SHARING US PREOCCUPATION DID NOT EXPRESS ALARM AT CURRENT POLITICAL IMPASSE IN PORTUGAL. HE WAS EAGER IN TACKLING SUBJECT AND OBVIOUSLY GRATEFUL AT US INITIATIVE IN ASKING FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS. HIS RELUCTANCE TO GO BEYOND GIVING HIS "PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS" IS EXPLICABLE BY FACT THAT CASSAROLI RETURNED FROM SEVERAL WEEKS LEAVE ONLY ON MONDAY, AUGUST 25, AND HE MAY THEREFORE NOT HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLETELY BRIEF HIMSELF. AN INDICATION OF THIS WAS HIS COMMENT THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS STAFF TO RECALL THE PAPAL NUNCIO FROM PORTUGAL IN ORDER TO PROVIDE VATICAN WITH CURRENT FIRST-HAND INFORMATION BUT THAT HE HAD NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASCERTAIN AS YET THE STATUS OF THE NUNCIO'S PLANS. FURTHERMORE, GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THE TWO QUESTIONS POSED HE MAY WISH TO CONSULT POPE PAUL AND ARCHBISHOP BENELLI, THE SUBSTITUTE SECRETARY OF STATE. FROM OUR Vantage POINT CASSAROLI'S PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS INDICATE THAT HE BELIEVES THAT CHURCH'S ROLE CAN BE MORE ASSERTIVE AND EFFICACIOUS WHEN THE LAST CHIPS NEED TO BE PLAYED OUT IN PORTUGAL. ACCORDINGLY IT WOULD SEEM USEFUL FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE TO PURSUE DIALOGUE DURING HIS TRIP TO ROME
SEPTEMBER 11-20. VOLPE
UNQUOTE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CAT-C, NO TEXT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE204402
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FVORTIZ
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: N750003-0520
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750812/aaaaakeo.tel
Line Count: 141
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 75 STATE 199682
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 JUN 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <15 OCT 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PORTUGAL AND THE VATICAN
TAGS: PINT
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006